

Record 1

20 August 2018

Mr Richard Bruton T.D.
Minister of Education and Skills
richard_bruton@education.gov.ie

Dear Richard

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of [REDACTED] concerning Waiting Lists.

I acknowledge that while waiting times can be unacceptably long and cause a burden to patients and their families, good practice around the management of hospital waiting lists recommends periodic validation of waiting lists. The validation of waiting lists can help provide clean, accurate, up to date waiting list data which reflects the true demand for hospital services. For example, last year 477,000 outpatients did not attend their appointment. These are appointments which could potentially have been offered to other patients.

Validation is the process whereby hospital administration contacts patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed. Importantly, the Validation process allows for situations where, if requested by the GP/referring clinician, patients can be reinstated back to their original place on to the Waiting List. While at present validation methods are a matter for each individual hospital, the HSE Outpatient Services Performance Improvement Programme (OSPIP) principles of good practice in outpatient waiting list validation advises that patients should be given a reasonable amount of time to respond and be sent a reminder letter where no response in made to the first contact. Furthermore, in the case of vulnerable patients, patients in high-risk specialties, and paediatric patients, the relevant consultant must approve the removal from the waiting list.

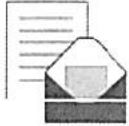
In addition last month I approved the establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation function in the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The new office is expected to commence validation of patient files in September. I have requested that this new office review the protocols already in place with a view to developing a standardisation of approach across all waiting lists and all hospitals in line the best patient centred practices.

I hope this is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Simon Harris T.D.
Minister for Health



Waiting list validation protocol

Press Office - Dept Health to: O'Neill, Katie

18/07/2018 16:06

Sent by: Mary Jane Trimble

Cc: press_office

Bcc: Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance

Katie,

Please find the reply to your query below. Attributable to a Department of Health spokesperson.

While waiting times can be unacceptably long and cause a burden to patients and their families, good practice around the management of hospital waiting lists recommends periodic validation of waiting lists.

The validation of waiting lists can help provide clean, accurate, up to date waiting list data which reflects the true demand for hospital services. For example, last year 477,000 outpatients did not attend their appointment. These are appointments which could potentially have been offered to other patients.

Validation is the process whereby hospital administration contacts patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed.

Importantly, the Validation process allows for situations where, if requested by the GP/referring clinician, patients can be reinstated back to their original place on to the Waiting List.

The Minister has already approved the establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation function in the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The new Office is expected to commence validation of patient files in September. The Minister has requested that this new office will review the protocols already in place with a view to developing a standardisation of approach across all waiting lists and all hospitals in line the best patient-centred practices.

Kind regards,

Mary Jane Trimble

Press and Communications Office

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Department of Health

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"O'Neill, Katie"

Good afternoon, Katie O'Neill from The Times Irel...

18/07/2018 12:56:09

From: "O'Neill, Katie" [REDACTED]
To: press_office@health.gov.ie
Date: 18/07/2018 12:56

Subject: Waiting list validation protocol

Good afternoon,

Katie O'Neill from The Times Ireland Edition here. I am writing in relation to the waiting list validation protocol which has been heavily criticised by medical practitioners over the past week. Doctors have told how GP practices received hundreds of letters last week from hospitals informing them patients have been removed from waiting lists for failing to confirm they still needed an appointment in time. The department of health and the HSE has been accused of using the protocol to "massage" and "manipulate" hospital waiting list figures.

Most medical commentators agree that waiting list validation is important, but have said that it can not continue in its current form.

Will the minister for health/department of health consider reforming the protocol following the concerns raised by doctors and representative bodies such as the NAGP and the IMO?

This is for tomorrow's paper so I hope you can get back with a response in the next few hours.

Kind regards,

Katie

--

Katie O'Neill

The Times Ireland Edition

[REDACTED]

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Re: Lines on validation 
Linda O'Rourke to: Joanne Lonergan
Cc: Press Office - Dept Health, Scheduled & Unscheduled Care
performance Unit

18/07/2018 16:02

Hi Joanne

Re your queries below:

Is it possible to say that people aren't being only given 10 days and it isn't only one letter?
While validation methods are a matter for each individual hospital, however the HSE Outpatient Services Performance Improvement programme (OSPIP) principles of good practice in outpatient waiting list validation includes the following "Patients should be given a reasonable amount of time to respond and be sent a reminder letter where no response in made to the first contact."

Does 'postal validation cycles must be completed within a six week timeframe' mean it's longer than this?

This statement refers to the NTPF protocol for validation of inpatient and daycase waiting lists and I think, from speaking informally to the NTPF on this general issue, the general timeframe for responses would be about the 4 week with a 6 week maximum. However, in any response it might be worth noting that the Department has requested the National Treatment Purchase Fund (under who's remit the which the newly established central validation unit will come under) to review any validation protocols already in place, with a view to developing clarity and a standardisation of approach across all waiting lists and all hospitals in line the best patient-centred practices.

Do we know if there are any special provisions made for older people?

I can check this, however it could be difficult to definitely state that special provision is made for elderly patients, however, the (OSPIP) principles of good practice in outpatient waiting list validation includes the following: In the case of vulnerable patients, patients in high-risk specialties, and paediatric patients, the relevant consultant must approve the removal from the waiting list

Overall, the establishment of the new centralised validation office, which will take effect from September, will put in place, IT systems protocols and practices which will ensure a standardisation of approach to the validation of all waiting lists across all hospitals.

Please give me a shout if you wish to discuss or require any further information.


Linda O'Rourke

Scheduled & Unscheduled Care Performance Unit

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Department of Health

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Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2, D02 VW90

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Joanne Lonergan---18/07/2018 15:19:39---Hi Linda, Thanks for getting this back to us.

From: Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE
To: Linda O'Rourke/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Cc: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE@SLAINTE, Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit
Date: 18/07/2018 15:19

Subject: Re: Lines on validation

Hi Linda,

Thanks for getting this back to us.

It's difficult to respond to the claims being made by the NAGP because of the variation in methods. Is it possible to say that people aren't being only given 10 days and it isn't only one letter? Does 'postal validation cycles must be completed within a six week timeframe' mean it's longer than this? Do we know if there are any special provisions made for older people?

The Minister has been asked to do a clip with RTE in Kerry on this.

Could we get any more on the questions above?

Thanks,
Jo

Linda O'Rourke---18/07/2018 12:44:35---Joanne Please find attached (i) Briefing including suggested press points on validation process and

From: Linda O'Rourke/SLAINTE
To: Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Cc: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE@SLAINTE, Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit
Date: 18/07/2018 12:44
Subject: Re: Lines on validation

Joanne
Please find attached (i) Briefing including suggested press points on validation process and (ii) shorter document containing high level points

[attachment "Press Points Validation 2018.07.18.docx" deleted by Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE]

[attachment "Validation points.docx" deleted by Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE]

Kind regards
Linda

Linda O'Rourke
Scheduled & Unscheduled Care Performance Unit

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Department of Health

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Joanne Lonergan---17/07/2018 23:24:25---Hi All, Minister likely to be doing media interview(s) tomorrow on Slaintecare and given much social

From: Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE
To: Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit
Cc: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE@slainte
Date: 17/07/2018 23:24
Subject: Lines on validation

Hi All,

Minister likely to be doing media interview(s) tomorrow on Slaintecare and given much social media commentary on validation I expect it will come up. Could I get some additional lines to those we had for weekend media query? Particularly on process: how many letters/calls do people get & how much time to respond etc?

Thanks,
Jo

Sent from my iPhone

Validation of Waiting Lists

Briefing Note

Suggested Press Points:

- I acknowledge that while waiting times can be unacceptably long and cause a burden to patients and their families, good practice around the management of hospital waiting lists recommends periodic validation of waiting lists.
 - The validation of waiting lists can help provide clean, accurate, up to date waiting list data which reflects the true demand for hospital services. For example, last year 477,000 outpatients did not attend their appointment. These are appointments which could potentially have been offered to other patients.
 - Validation is the process whereby hospital administration contacts patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed.
 - Importantly, the Validation process allows for situations where, if requested by the GP/referring clinician, patients can be reinstated back to their original place on to the Waiting List.
 - Last month I approved the establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation function in the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The new Office is expected to commence validation of patient files in September. I have requested that this new office will review the protocols already in place with a view to developing a standardisation of approach across all waiting lists and all hospitals in line the best patient-centred practices.
-

Briefing Note:

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) *National Inpatient, Day Case, Planned Procedure (IDPP) Waiting List Management Protocol* sets out the process for the validation of **Inpatient and Day Case** waiting lists.

- Validation methods vary across the hospital system. It can be undertaken through telephone, text or postal validation.
- Postal validation cycles must be completed within a six week timeframe.
- When a patient is removed from a waiting list due to non-response to a written validation cycle, notification must be sent to the patient's GP, Source of Referral (SOR), and the patient.
- If requested by the GP, the patient can be reinstated back to their original place on to the waiting list.

The NTPF have committed to commencing a review of the IPDC protocol by the end of this year.

The HSE Outpatient Services Performance Improvement programme (OSPIP) principles of good practice in **outpatient waiting list validation** includes the following:

- Patients should be given a reasonable amount of time to respond and be sent a reminder letter where no response is made to the first contact.
- Patients removed from waiting lists should be notified in writing with a copy sent to the source of referral/GP. In the case of vulnerable patients, patients in high-risk specialties, and paediatric patients, the relevant consultant must approve the removal from the waiting list.
- Any requests for reinstatement should be addressed on a case-by-case basis and reviewed by clinicians where there is any issue regarding such reinstatement.

Establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation function in the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF):

Last month, Minister Harris approved the establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation function in the NTPF. Validation of patient files will commence in September.

The new office will consolidate and centralise validation activity for all Inpatient / Daycase (IPDC) and Outpatient waiting lists within the NTPF and offers a number of advantages:

- a standardisation of approach across both IPDC and OPD waiting lists and all hospitals;
- economies of scales as a result of all validation being undertaken from one office;
- some freeing up of resources in Hospital Administration Departments, which can be used to process increasing numbers of CANs issued by the NTPF;
- identification of national trends;
- building on work already underway in the NTPF around the trialling of correspondence for use in the validation of waiting lists. The NTPF have advised that further trialling of correspondence will be undertaken in 2019.

The Scheduled & Unscheduled Care Performance Unit will also request that the NTPF prepare and roll out an Outpatient Waiting List Management Protocol equivalent to the IPDC protocol already in place.

HSE validation of the Outpatient Waiting List:

In 2017, the HSE commenced a phased validation of all outpatient waiting lists be completed. The HSE Validation Report, Review of Phase 1 OPD Validation Process, March 2018 states: 'In November, 2017 the HSE National Director, Acute Hospital Division (AHD), formally requested all Hospital Group CEOs to undertake a validation of OPD waiting lists, in line with national guidance from NTPF and OSPIP'.

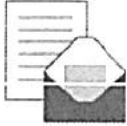
The Reports, and table below set out an overview of the outcome of Phase 1 of this validation exercise. By March 2018, the HSE advised that 43,307 patients on the Outpatient waiting list have been validated. 17% of patients contacted by 5 Hospital Groups came off the list.

	Phase 1		
	24 - 48+ months		
	Completion January 26th 2018		
Hospital Group	No. to be Targeted	Total Targeted	Total Removed
Children's Hospital Group	2,997	1,892	440
Dublin Midlands Hospital Group	4,432	15,888	2,475
Saolta University Health Care Group	3,928	13,601	2,090
South/ South West Hospital Group	7,687	12,577	2,226
University of Limerick Hospital Group	2,678	2,349	557
Ireland East Hospital Group	4,247		
RCSI Hospitals Group	2,391		
National Total	28,360	46,307	7,788

Scheduled & Unscheduled Care Performance Unit
18th July 2018

Validation of hospital waiting lists

- **Validation of waiting lists is a process where hospitals contact patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed.**
- **This validation process allows for situations where, if requested by the GP/referring clinician, patients can be reinstated back to their original place onto the waiting list.**
- **Last month, the Minister for health approved the establishment of a central waiting list validation function with the National Treatment Purchase Fund. He has also requested that this new office will review the protocols already in place with a view to developing a standardisation of approach across all waiting lists and all hospitals in line with the best patient-centred practices.**



Re: HSE line issued on Waiting list validation protocol FYI

Joanne Lonergan to: Press Office - Dept Health

18/07/2018 14:39

Cc: Mary McCarthy, Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit

Hi All,

Can the HSE send that clarification to everyone they have already given the line to, not just the ones that come in from now please? RTE for example.

Thanks,
Jo

Press Office - Dept Health Thanks Mary, That is a point that needs...

18/07/2018 14:30:21

From: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE
To: Mary McCarthy/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Cc: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE@SLAINTE, Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit, Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Date: 18/07/2018 14:30
Subject: Re: HSE line issued on Waiting list validation protocol FYI
Sent by: Mary Jane Trimble

Thanks Mary,

That is a point that needs clarification.

Kind regards,

Mary Jane

Press and Communications Office

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Department of Health

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Hawkins House, Dublin 2, D02 VW90

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Mary McCarthy Thanks Mary Jane I just spoke to Angela Fitzgera...

18/07/2018 14:27:39

From: Mary McCarthy/SLAINTE
To: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Cc: Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit, Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Date: 18/07/2018 14:27
Subject: Re: HSE line issued on Waiting list validation protocol FYI

Thanks Mary Jane

I just spoke to Angela Fitzgerald HSE and they are going to update that further to clarify that the validation process allows for situations where GPs can request patients who have been taken off the list to be reinstated to their original spot on the list.

Best regards
Mary

Mary McCarthy
Principal Officer Scheduled & Unscheduled Care Performance Unit

An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

Teach Hawkins, Sráid Hawkins, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 VW90
Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2, D02 VW90



Press Office - Dept Health This just came in from HSE press Office... 18/07/2018 14:17:56

From: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE
To: Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit, Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Cc: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE@SLAINTE
Date: 18/07/2018 14:17
Subject: HSE line issued on Waiting list validation protocol FYI
Sent by: Mary Jane Trimble

This just came in from HSE press Office for our information

Mary Jane

Press and Communications Office

An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

Teach Hawkins, Sráid Hawkins, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 VW90
Hawkins House, Dublin 2, D02 VW90



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----- Forwarded by Mary Jane Trimble/SLAINTE on 18/07/2018 14:16 -----

From: PRESS <PRESS@HSE.IE>
To: "Press_Office_Dept_Health@health.gov.ie" <Press_Office_Dept_Health@health.gov.ie>
Cc: annt martin [REDACTED]
Date: 18/07/2018 14:15
Subject: FW: Waiting list validation protocol

Hello there,
Just an FYI, this is the response that we have issued to queries about validation letters.
Many Thanks,
Emma

HSE Response:

Hospital Groups carry out validation exercises on waiting lists across all Hospital sites as per

agreed national guidelines to ensure that patients still require their outpatient appointment. This helps improve overall use of resources and access times for patients.

Last year almost half a million (479,000) outpatients did not attend their outpatient appointment. In order to help patients access timely appointments, the HSE is asking patients to let their hospital know as soon as possible if they cannot attend scheduled appointments so that other patients may be offered appointments.

You would need to go to each Hospital Group for further detail regarding communications issued to patients by each hospital.

ENDS



Query from the Times Ireland in relation to Waiting list validation protocol

Scheduled & Unscheduled

Press Office - Dept Health to: Care performance Unit, Linda O'Rourke

18/07/2018 13:22

Sent by: **Mary Jane Trimble**

Cc: Joanne Lonergan, Press Office - Dept Health

Please see the query below from the Times Ireland and also a draft response based on the information on validation you supplied earlier.

Can you advise if this will be a suitable answer to the query? This is for tomorrow's paper so grateful for a prompt reply.

While waiting times can be unacceptably long and cause a burden to patients and their families, good practice around the management of hospital waiting lists recommends periodic validation of waiting lists.

The validation of waiting lists can help provide clean, accurate, up to date waiting list data which reflects the true demand for hospital services. For example, last year 477,000 outpatients did not attend their appointment. These are appointments which could potentially have been offered to other patients.

Validation is the process whereby hospital administration contacts patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed.

Importantly, the Validation process allows for situations where, if requested by the GP/referring clinician, patients can be reinstated back to their original place on to the Waiting List.

Last month the Minister approved the establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation function in the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The new Office is expected to commence validation of patient files in September. The Minister has requested that this new office will review the protocols already in place with a view to developing a standardisation of approach across all waiting lists and all hospitals in line the best patient-centred practices.

Many thanks,

Mary Jane

Press and Communications Office

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— Forwarded by Mary Jane Trimble/SLAINTE on 18/07/2018 13:14 —

From: "O'Neill, Katie" <[REDACTED]>
To: press_office@health.gov.ie
Date: 18/07/2018 12:56
Subject: Waiting list validation protocol

Good afternoon,

Katie O'Neill from The Times Ireland Edition here. I am writing in relation to the waiting list validation protocol which has been heavily criticised by medical practitioners over the past week. Doctors have told how GP practices received hundreds of letters last week from hospitals informing them patients have been removed from waiting lists for failing to confirm they still needed an appointment in time. The department of health and the HSE has been accused of using the protocol to "massage" and "manipulate" hospital waiting list figures. Most medical commentators agree that waiting list validation is important, but have said that it can not continue in its current form.

Will the minister for health/department of health consider reforming the protocol following the concerns raised by doctors and representative bodies such as the NAGP and the IMO?

This is for tomorrow's paper so I hope you can get back with a response in the next few hours.

Kind regards,
Katie

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Katie O'Neill
The Times Ireland Edition
[REDACTED]

--

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Re: Lines on validation
Paul Bolger to: Mary McCarthy
Cc: Janice Coughlan, Linda O'Rourke, Siobhan Hargis

18/07/2018 10:22

Thanks Mary

It's just to make sure that we set out the facts on the matter.

If you can put the step by step process, including guideline on days to reply and what happens when Patient or GP replies, in a concise way the Minister could tweet a picture of the steps.

It would also be good to state the latest stats in responses to validation and the number of patients removed over the last 12 months. This highlights that the vast majority of patients are responding and the system is working.

From our perspective and not for note:

This is all the more reason for the establishment of a central validation office. It's shows that the NTPF will need a strong comms strategy to accompany the validation process.

You may need to include a short description on the validation process and the NTPF approach, including number of days to reply, in the outpatient plan.

Give me a call when free

Sent from IBM Notes Traveler

Mary McCarthy --- Re: Lines on validation ---

From "Mary McCarthy" <[REDACTED]>

:

To: "Paul Bolger" <[REDACTED]>

Cc: "Janice Coughlan" <[REDACTED]>, "Linda O'Rourke" <[REDACTED]>

"Siobhan Hargis" <[REDACTED]>

Date: Wed, 18 Jul 2018 10:09

Subj: Re: Lines on validation

ect:

Hi Paul

I phoned Angela's office and she is at a meeting until 11.30. I told her PA that it was urgent t and explained what we were looking for. Angela is to phone me back.

Re the question about the RCSI - the latest press queries have indeed related to Our Lady's Hospital Drogheda and Beaumont, However Louise O'Reilly mentioned in the Dail recently that the children's hospital were using 'aggressive' validation techniques too. We are working on a note here.

Mary

Mary McCarthy

Principal Officer Scheduled & Unscheduled Care Performance Unit

An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

Teach Hawkins, Sráid Hawkins, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 VW90
Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2, D02 VW90

[REDACTED]

From: Paul Bolger/SLAINTE
To: Siobhan Hargis/SLAINTE@slainte, Mary McCarthy/SLAINTE@slainte, Linda O'Rourke/SLAINTE@slainte, Janice Coughlan/SLAINTE@slainte
Cc: Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit
Date: 18/07/2018 09:34
Subject: Re: Lines on validation

See message from Minister below:

Mary, can you speak to Angela about putting out a statement and the HSE contacting the NAGP directly to clarify.

Am I right that the origins for a lot of this is the RCSI?

Hi Paul. Yet again NAGP on morning Ireland said that if you do not respond to a validation letter and your GP puts you back on/re-refers you go to bottom of list. This misinformation has been peddled for days now. Can you make sure HSE clarify this is not the case and include that in their responses and statements. My understanding is you go back on the list where you were.

Assertion also being made that people aren't given long enough to respond to letter. I know Joanne was looking for a note on the process - how long do you have to reply to a letter, how many do you get etc etc.

Would appreciate that note.

Thanks,

Simon

Sent from IBM Notes Traveler

From: Joanne Lonergan/SLAINTE
To: Scheduled & Unscheduled Care performance Unit
Cc: Press Office - Dept Health/SLAINTE@slainte
Date: 17/07/2018 23:24
Subject: Lines on validation

Hi All,

Minister likely to be doing media interview(s) tomorrow on Slaintecare and given much social media

commentary on validation I expect it will come up. Could I get some additional lines to those we had for weekend media query? Particularly on process: how many letters/calls do people get & how much time to respond etc?

Thanks,
Jo

Sent from my iPhone